



Commonwealth of Virginia

Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services

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Increased Access to Health Coverage for Lawful Permanent Residents Begins April 1

~ Virginia Medicaid agency working with community partners to reach newly eligible individuals ~

Richmond – The Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) today welcomed the end to a state policy that restricted access to health coverage for thousands of lawful permanent residents.

The so-called 40 Quarters Rule required green card holders to produce proof that they or members of their household had a work history totaling 10 years, or 40 quarters, in order to qualify for Medicaid health care coverage. Virginia previously had been one of only six states requiring this additional step for Medicaid eligibility.

A provision in the state budget passed by the General Assembly during last year's special session, and effective April 1, 2021, ends the work requirement. Lawful permanent residents must still meet a federal requirement of a five-year waiting period after entering the United States before they are eligible for Medicaid.

"This historic policy change is long overdue," said Karen Kimsey, DMAS Director. "I am so grateful that we are finally able to break down this unjust barrier and offer these individuals access to doctor visits, prescriptions, hospital care and all of the health care services they need to be safe and to thrive in these uncertain times."

The Virginia Medicaid agency is working with community organizations across the Commonwealth to ensure that individuals who may be newly eligible are aware of the policy change and have the opportunity to apply for free or low-cost health coverage.

“It’s important for individuals in our immigrant communities to reach out and apply for coverage because there are many paths to eligibility,” said Sarah Hatton, DMAS Deputy of Administration. “Whether you are a green card holder, a refugee, an asylee, a pregnant immigrant or fall into another category, I encourage you to contact us and learn more about the services that may be available to you and your family.”

Individuals can apply for Medicaid online at www.commonhealth.virginia.gov. Application assisters are available at no cost to help with the process. Visitors to the [CoverVA](#) and the Spanish language [Cubre Virginia](#) websites can find listings of application assisters in their communities. Those who prefer to speak to someone by phone can call 1-888-392-5132.

Information about the policy change and other resources for immigrants are available on the [CoverVA](#) and [Cubre Virginia](#) websites.

“We are thrilled that lawful permanent residents living in Virginia now have the opportunity to receive the quality, affordable health coverage they need to thrive,” said Jill Hanken, health attorney for the Virginia Poverty Law Center. “This is a wonderful day, and one we have worked hard to achieve.”

According to an analysis of U.S. Department of Homeland Security data by the Virginia Poverty Law Center, about 28,000 Virginians become lawful permanent residents each year. More than three-quarters of those individuals receive their green cards as relatives of U.S. citizens, through family petitions or through their employment. To date, DMAS has identified about 4,000 individuals who may be newly eligible for Medicaid due to this change in policy if they meet other requirements.